

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY

Subject

Out-of-Home Placement for Children

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Purpose

To establish a policy for the provision of out-of-home placement whenever a child cannot remain in the home of a parent, custodial relative, or legal guardian.

Background

Out-of-home placement refers to any arrangement made by one of the County's placing agencies for a child to live apart from his/her parent or legal guardian in an approved relative or non-related extended family member's home; or in a licensed or certified home or licensed residential facility on a 24-hour basis. The County of San Diego's placing agencies, the Probation Department and the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), are authorized to provide placement services by State law and do so through the organizational units:

JUVENILE DIVISION (PROBATION DEPARTMENT):

Out-of-home placement services are provided to children adjudicated as delinquent wards of the Court pursuant to Section 602 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES (HHSA):

Out-of-home placement services are provided to children adjudicated as dependents of the Court pursuant to Section 300 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

Voluntary out-of-home placement services are provided to children pursuant to Section 16500 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

ADOPTIONS (HHSA):

Out-of-home placement services are provided to children pending relinquishment and adoptive placement, and may include residential care when the need arises pursuant to Section 8704 of the Family Code and Section 1500 of the Health and Safety Code.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH (HHSA):

A range of psychiatric services are provided to emotionally disturbed children and their families, including evaluation and treatment in psychiatric hospitals, day treatment and out-patient clinics, and placement in therapeutic foster family agencies and residential treatment programs, pursuant to Title 1, Division 7, Chapter 26.5 (commencing with Section 7570) of the Government Code.

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Policy

It is the policy of the Board of Supervisors that County placing agencies will place children in out-of-home care only when all available resources for providing necessary services in-home have been utilized or the level of risk is too high for the child to be maintained in his/her own home or that of relatives or guardians. The primary criteria to be used in the evaluation for placement will be the individual needs of the child. Consistent with these needs, when similar services are provided to similar children by out-of-home care facilities, all County departments shall select facilities that are most likely to maintain the child's relationship with the family and/or community of origin and to offer the best services for the needed placement.

Guidelines

1. The decision to place a child in out-of-home care will be made only after an intensive, professional review of the case history and the development of a placement plan.
2. Children in need of placement will be evaluated in terms of their needs and the level of care available. Consistent with their needs, children shall be placed in the least restrictive placement that provides the minimum level of care required.
3. The suitability of each placement will be reviewed and evaluated on an ongoing basis, as specified by State regulations.
4. In-county out-of-home care programs will be utilized, whenever appropriate, in preference to out-of-county programs.
5. The out-of-home placement of children will follow best practice guidelines, in order of priority: relative; family known to child; licensed foster home within the community from which the child was removed; other licensed foster home; foster family agency home; group home.
6. Whenever several suitable out-of-home care programs are available with equal quality of service delivery, preference will be given to the least expensive program meeting the individual needs of the child.
7. The goal of out-of home care is the timely, safe and successful return of the child, whenever possible, to his/her family and/or community. If it is not possible to return the child to the parent, relative, or guardian, a permanent plan for a stable family life through adoption or other long-term plan will be implemented in a timely manner, as specified by law.
8. Children shall be placed in out-of-home care placements that are certified, licensed, or approved by HHSA in accordance with standards as referenced in Welfare and Institutions Code 309(d); and are regularly inspected.
9. Consistent with a continuum of care, development of additional facilities for the most disturbed children and adolescents is required through an integrated effort of

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the County placing agencies and the California Health and Human Services Agency, by addressing licensing, regulatory, and funding resources.

Funding

The cost of placement services is shared by a wide variety of funding sources, primarily: Federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children - Foster Care (AFDC-FC), State AFDC-FC, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Emergency Assistance (EA), Short-Doyle Medi-Cal, and County General Funds. In certain situations, parental contributions, private or third party coverage, and even special public school funding may offset or supplement the primary funding sources.

Definitions

The out-of-home programs for children represent a continuum in the level of care ranging from less restrictive, less intensive foster care, to more restrictive, more therapeutic residential care. The cost of care increases proportionately according to the level of care:

RELATIVE OR NON-RELATED EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBER:

The placement of a child into the home of a relative or a non-related adult caregiver who has an established familial or mentoring relationship with the child, when circumstances exist that make it dangerous or inappropriate for the child to remain in the home of his/her parent or guardian. The caregiver must be "approved" by HHSA through a formal process, including in-home safety inspection and criminal and child abuse history clearances, before a child is placed in the home. (Funding Source: AFDC-FC, EA, SSI, County General Funds)

LICENSED FOSTER HOME:

The placement of a child into a foster home, licensed by the State (contracted to Foster Home Licensing - HHSA), when circumstances exist that make it dangerous or inappropriate for the child to remain in the home of his/her parent or guardian. (Funding Source: AFDC-FC, EA, SSI, County General Funds)

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY SUPPORTED FOSTER CARE:

The placement of a child into treatment-level Foster Family Agency certified homes, in which foster parents receive additional training, support services and financial incentives. These placements are designed for children who present the unusually difficult problems of emotional disturbance or behavioral dysfunction, and are in need of close supervision, under circumstances that would make it impossible for them to receive appropriate treatment and care in regular, County-licensed foster homes. (Funding Source: AFDC-FC, EA, SSI, County General Funds)

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RESIDENTIAL CARE:

The placement of children who are in need of professional treatment and supervision related to developmental disability, serious emotional disturbance, or delinquent behavior, and who are in danger of abuse, neglect or exploitation, into professionally staffed, State licensed facilities commonly referred to as group homes, 24-hour schools or residential treatment facilities. (Funding Source: AFDC-FC, EA, SSI, County General Funds)

TEMPORARY CARE PROGRAMS:

The placement of children into these programs may be made by a placing agency, but can also be made by self-referral. The needs of temporary shelter and crisis intervention in a community-based setting are met in these programs. This includes subsidized foster care, and Emergency Shelter care. (Funding Source: Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Funds, AFDC-FC, EA)

Sunset Date

This policy will be reviewed for continuance by 12-31-14.

Board Action

7-1-80 (30)
11-13-84 (8)
3-3-88 (24)
6-15-93 (41)
12-5-95 (36)
12-3-02 (8)
10-24-07 (5)

CAO Reference

1. Health and Human Services Agency
2. Probation Department